

Mobilians were far from being tame savages. They were like all Indians, merciless and blood-thirsty.

As said before, De Soto landed amongst them in 1540, with 800 men. Twelve priests, intent on Christianizing the red-faces, volunteered to accompany him through these wild and then unknown regions. This hardy band proceeded northwesterly, meeting at every step with insurmountable obstacles from both the nature of the country and its sole inhabitants, the beasts and savages. Their advancing ranks were greeted only with death. Some few Creeks were converted but to be murdered by their heathen brethren. Each and every white man alike, whether pagan or Christian, priest or layman, was doomed to the bloody implements of death—the tomahawk and scalping knife. Nevertheless, there were, in after years, zealous missionaries who jeopardized their lives for the conversion of the those heathen aborigines of America; noble men, Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans and other religious whose only thought and desire was the salvation of the Indians.

In 1565 Peter Meredez undertook the exploration and evangelization of the southeast. He founded St. Augustine, the pioneer city of America, from whence, a few years later, the missionaries poured forth in countless numbers on their great work of mercy, bringing to the hardy children of the forest the consolation of the true religion. This city was several times destroyed by the Indians, and hundreds of missionaries and neophytes merited to receive the golden crown of martyrdom within and without its walls. In 1702 St. Augustine together with all its surrounding missions was again burned by the English—an event which is a lasting shame of apostate England.

The Creeks now numbered about 6,000 warriors with fifty towns scattered far and wide over the Creek country.

Each of these towns was independent of the rest and governed by what they called micco, or elective king. Each town had its square enclosed by houses for the celebration of the great fast, called *posketa*, or more commonly *busk*, which was attended with curious ceremonies. The micco and war chief had special houses around the square. The number of chiefs in time became very great and oppressive to the tribe so that they were reduced to five hundred.\* They have since adopted a somewhat different form of government of which we shall speak later on.

The Creeks have been noted for some peculiar customs, many of which they still retain. One was their method of making fire for the "Green Corn Dance." A "fire-devil" had to be appointed regularly to perform this job. His apparatus for making the new fire was both unique and simple. It consisted of but four sticks placed end to end in the shape of a square cross. When fire had to be made, the "fire-devil" would take his rude machine and by quick and rapid friction cause sparks to fly from the junctions. Thereupon a brisk fire was started, around which danced the "Green Corners."

This nation was the first to write an Indian alphabet and system of figures, and thus was much further advanced in civilization than other American Indians. But now that the missionaries were killed, neophytes dispersed and churches destroyed, the Indians fell back into their original state of barbarism. This was the result of English perfidy and the proselyting zeal of the Protestants. "It was the result of jealousy against Catholicity, beyond whose pale no heathen nation was ever brought to the light of Christianity. It was the Colonial Government that first obstructed the work of conversion, and the fatal policy, inherited by our Re-

\*Encyclopedia Brit.: Vol. V., P. 472.